

This is Bilk # 61 for September 1994. Bilk appears bimonthly, and subscriptions are DM 15 for Germany and Europe and DM 20 for the rest of the world. I cannot accept cheques in foreign currency and prefer bank notes. All correspondence should be addressed to Ulrich Magin, Fribolinstr. 5, 74321 Bietigheim-Bissingen, Germany.

BEHEMOTH:

- Loch Ness: Andreas Trottmann has sent me a newsletter titled Loch Ness Report, May 1994, in which he reports on his research at the Loch. Most interesting are new sighting reports he lists, although I don't know if I'm free to quote them. Most exiting (if true) is a Aberdeen Press & Journal report (from April 1, 94) about Brazilian tourists Paolo Rolf who took a picture of Nessie's big head out of the tourist submarine. The pilot of the sub was called Gordon Swindells, which suggests a hoax, yet Trottmann has found that a person of that name actually pilots the submarine! Trottmann also lists two Nessie sightings, one from September 1992 and one from 1993, both in Urquhart Bay. Andreas has also researched a big black cat report by the same witness. This sighting was also referred to in the Inverness Courier, 14 Dec 1993 (it happened in Oct 1993).
- Bibliography: I have received the usual big letters with clips from Andreas Trottmann: On June 3, the Inverness Courier reported on core samples from the bottom of the Loch, taken by scientists from Plymouth and Wolverhampton Universities. These samples date from the the time of the retreat of the glaciers after the Ice Age, 12,000 years ago, until today, and cover the whole story of the Loch - and of human interaction with the environment in Scotland. On July 5 and June 14, the Courier reported on Fort Augustus Abbey, which, after the closing of the school, will try to get funds by opening an exhibition on the history of the Great Glen, the religious history of Scotland, and the past of Fort Augustus. Mr Harmsworth (from the monster exhibition in Drumnadrochit) is giving his helping hand. In an attempt to collect money for the refugees in Rwanda, Kim Avis-Gordon (28) tried to swim the Loch in June, the Inverness Courier (July 1) reports. Andreas Trottmann has also sent me a story which made it into several papers, about the discovery of a bag on the bottom of Loch Ness off the Clansman Hotel (Inverness Courier, July 1). It was spotted during a dive of the tourist submarine which now operates there, and recovered by William Bolter, the pilot. It belonged to Gaspar Sagrista-Carner from Barcelona and contained 50,000 pesetas, the passport, keys and a pen (Die Rheinpfalz, July 2; also Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, July 2, p. 9 and taz, same date). This report had also been in the London Times, July 1. The (Swiss?) Maritim-Revue 8/94, pp. 34-39 has a report on the activities of Swiss watchmaker Swatch on Loch Ness Swatch sponsors R.O.S.E.T.T.A., Recovery Of Sediments Enabling Translations To Accustics, the sediment recovery programme which will aid the research into the Lochs past and the way such a large body of water interacts with the human population along it's banks. Nessletter 118 for July 1994 has a long and detailed description of that sediment core-taking work. The theory that Nessie is in fact a gigantic Baltic sturgeon reached the papers in Germany, I have a clip from my local Rundschau (Bietigheim), June 30. The clip quotes Adrian Shine who has suggested Nessie is a surgeon after his extensive search of the lake. Surgeons can be up to 3m/10 ft in length and weigh 200 kilogrammes. Shine believes the fish entered Loch Ness through the 10 km stretch of river connecting the lake with the North Sea. He ruled out any saurians in the Loch, as plesiosaurs died out 65 Million years ago and Loch Ness was still "a giant ice cube" 10,000 years ago. The newspaper says that the result of Shine's research, which has been going on since 1980, will soon be published. As I have pointed out, the idea that Nessie is a sturgeon sounds plausible, but it cannot explain the close-up sightings, the "genuine" photos and the sonar results - even less so the land sightings and related sea serpent reports. There may be sturgeons in the Loch, but than they surely were mistaken for a monster only rarely. The real monster has a different origin (if I'm correct, it is a cultural construct projected onto anything unusual in the Loch, be that log, wave, seal or sturgeon).
- Out-of-place reptiles and animals: This year, Europe has experienced a wave of strange creature sightings and "lake monsters". I lost most clips for one event, but recall a report was in the Rheinische Post, Düsseldorf, on July 22: two sea-lions escaped from a circus in Italy and escaped into Lago Maggiore. One had been caught after a week in freedom, the second was still at large. Far more headlines were given to a small cayman, just 3 ft in length, who escaped in July while his owner,

Jörg Zars, let it swim in a gravel pit used for bathing near NEuss, close to Düsseldorf. The creature escaped and hid in the depth of the lake. It was soon called "the monster of Loch Neuss" by the German press and TV channels, which followed the creature's antics for a week or two. Police tried to shoot it, because it was feared it could attack bathers and the owner of the pit already had losses in the region of several thousand Marks as he could not charge entry fees from bathers who were not allowed to swim by the police. Police armsmen waited for the creature for two days and nights, and although the cayman was reportedly hit several times, it always simply dived and disappeared. After animal campainers protested against the attempts to kill Sammy, the cayman, reptile experts and divers spotted Sammy at 8.35 on July 16 on the bottom of the lake and simply took it into their hands and brought the cayman into a zoo. End of that summer story,... (Sources: HAmburger Abendblatt, 14. July, p.28; Welt, 14. July, p.10; Frankfurter Rundschau, July 14, p. 34; Hamburger Morgenpost July 14, p.5; Bild Stuttgart July 14, p.10; Die Rheinpfalz, July 14; Süddeutsche Zeitung, July 14, p. 10; Die Rheinpfalz July 16). Around the same time, a "monster" caught in a garden of Frankfurt quarter Sachsenhause proved to be a snapping turtle (Die Rheinpfalz, July 11). The turtle was brought to FRankfurt Zoo where it was judged to be about 15 years of age. It seems that "pet lovers" will shy away from no exotic pet anymore.

KRAKEN:

- I spent my vacations in Malta this year. In the National MUseum for Natural History in Mdina, on Malta, there is a case with a giant squid which was caught on March 3, 1986, off Xemxija, Malta. It weighed 16 kilogrammes and was about (my guess) 1,5 m/ 5 ft in length (tentacles included). The description said it were the largest squid ever caught in the Mediterranean Sea and belonged to the genus Todarodes sagittatus. Unfortunately I was not able to take a picture, ~~and~~ nor was there a postcard of it on sale.

USO:

- The Malta newspaper The Times, June 24, p.19, had a report on US Navy submarines sinking trawlers whose net got entangled with the submarine. In February 1994, a 15 metre boat rolled over and sank 58 km west of the Olympic peninsula, Washington, in otherwise normal ocean conditions. And in June 1993, a 17 metre vessel disappeared off the Washington coast, and all three men on board were lost at sea. US Representative Jolene Unsoeld, Democrat of Washington, asked John Dalton, Navy Secretary, if not - after the end of the cold war - Russians and Americans could not agree on advising each other on their respective submarine's position, so that the lives of sailors were no longer endangered. Those who have read Bilk for some while know how many such "net incidents" are each year, and that many of them (when solved) can be attributed to US or NATO craft, so Scott Wilson (Navy Lieutenant Commander and spokesman for the TRident base on Puget Sound) sounds quite silly when he affirms: "the NAVy tries to keep its submarines away from known fishing areas."

DISCOVERIES:

- A complete skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus Rex has been discovered in Canada's Saskatchewan province. As John Storer, director of the Natural History Museum at Regina, reported in late June, the skeleton is of an unusual big size, 15 m/50 ft long and 5.5 m tall. (Die Rheinpfalz, July 1).
- In a swamp area in Pennsylvania, the fossil remains of the oldest amphibian of the USA have been discovered. Described in "Science" as the second oldest amphibian fossil of the world, the creature is an intermediate form between water and land animal. Palaeontologist Ted Daeschler said it lived about 140 million years before the dinosaurs. (Schwäbische Zeitung, July 30)
- Zoologist Wolfgang Peter has discovered a new animal. On the animal market of Saigon he noticed strange curved horns, which he could not identify, although he is, as the director of Münster Zoo, one of the experts for horn animals in the world. As reported in the (German edition?) of "BBC Wildlife", specialist Dr Alfred Feiler from Dresden's Museum for Animals has confirmed that the animal that once carried the horns is still unknown to science, and related to Saiga and other Vietnamese gazelles. The supposed habitat of the new animal is Da Lat Highland. As the horns are very expensive and have not been noted before by zoologists, it is assumed that the animal is very rare. The Vietnamese call it "Linh-Duong", meaning "holy goat". (Ludwigsburger Wochenblatt, 18. August)